

THE USE
OF
CIRCULATING
LIBRARIES
Considered;
WITH INSTRUCTIONS
FOR
OPENING AND CONDUCTING
A LIBRARY,
Either upon a large or small Plan.

“ Of all the various arts contrived by man,
“ To smooth his way through life's precarious span,
“ The art of letters is the first we find,
“ By Heaven sent to harmonize mankind.”

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1797.



PRICE ONE SHILLING.



THE USE
OF
CIRCULATING LIBRARIES,
Etc. Etc.



WHEN a man takes upon him to contradict received opinions and prejudices, it will be expected he should bring valid proof of what he advances.

The prejudices entertained against Circulating Libraries, are every day losing ground; and nothing can be a greater proof of their utility, than the great demand for books of late

years, and the increase of those repositories of instruction and amusement.

Moderate learning amongst the lower class, is now making great strides—formerly one half of the people who came into the world, went out of it again without the least education; and the busy part of mankind, unless their interest was concerned, gave themselves but little thought about the mental improvement of the poor.

The societies for distributing books,

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and the benevolence of the * rich, have of late years furnished them with food for the mind as well as the body.

About the latter end of the sixteenth century, true science began to dawn, and has been gradually expanding ever since.

At the time I have mentioned, a book was published in Germany, entitled "*Women not human Creatures,*" which was ascribed to Acidalius, an

* The late John Thornton, Esq. gave away annually books to a considerable amount, and his sons continue the example set them.

ingenious young German scholar, but falsely; he meeting with the manuscript gave it to a bookseller to publish, whether in earnest or jest is not certain.

It raised, however, a great clamour against him, particularly as you may suppose among the females.—Acidalius one day going to a feast where many ladies were assembled, as soon as he entered the room, they were about to set upon him one and all. In this imminent danger, single against an army, and such enemies too whose frowns could kill, (what then might their fists do) Acidalius

acted 'with an heroic presence of mind and command of thought, knowing force to be unavailing, he had recourse to stratagem, and begging a moment's audience, told them that he was not the author of the book—he had indeed read it—and must humbly confess, throwing himself upon their clemency and mercy, that he was in some respect of the author's opinion, for that he thought the ladies belonged rather to the angelical, than to the human species.

This well aimed stroke of policy had its effect; the ladies threw aside their anger and their arms, sat down

at table with him in good humour, and drank his health.

So ended this dreadful war, almost as quickly as it began, without bloodshed or damage—happy for human kind could all wars end in the like manner.

But the ladies of this day would not so quietly have put up with his explanation and apology; they search beyond the title page of a book, and many of the best works of fancy, published of late years, are the production of female pens, which it is possible might never have appeared,

nor their labours been rewarded, but for Circulating Libraries.

In these depots of learning, and stores for rational amusement, the terms of reading are easy, and adapted to all descriptions of persons and professions.

The rich may subscribe for a year, and the subscription will not exceed one guinea, in many instances less.— The middling class, or where the residence is temporary, may subscribe for three months, at the expence of four shillings; and those whose means are not so good, but have leisure time, may indulge in the luxury of

reading for a month, at the trifling expence of eighteen pence or two shillings, which probably will be more than doubly saved by thus employing it.

In the first instance, the yearly subscriber may read as many books for one guinea, which, to purchase, would cost ONE HUNDRED; and the other subscribers in proportion for their time.

Many instances may be adduced, to shew the utility of Circulating Libraries.

I know a man who was much addicted to the vice of gaming, who

frequently lost more money at one sitting, than would support his whole family for a week.

He was perfectly cured of this evil by subscribing to a Library — has gradually acquired a love for books, and now devotes those hours to reading, which formerly were spent in gaming.

Every one must approve his change, and applaud the means.

Proper books are proper companions, and often keep us from improper ones; with them we either travel or stay at home; with them we are sentimental or merry; and

from them we seldom part without improvement and pleasure.

To receive, and to communicate information and instruction, must constitute a considerable share of the happiness of human life—the variety of books to be met with at Libraries, opens an extensive field for choice of subjects, to inform and instruct; for instance, I shall notice the following, (among other subjects) always to be found in their catalogues, viz.

D I V I N I T Y ;
H I S T O R Y ;
N A R R A T I V E ;
A N D
N O V E L S .

DIVINITY consists of Holy Writ, books of devotion, religious tracts, and the sermons of eminent divines.

The weakening of moral obligations is of the utmost danger to a State; while Religion maintains its influence, the interests of society are upheld; when that great cement of society is weakened, anarchy and confusion soon succeed.

A friend to Religion is a friend to his country—it is a singular happiness, in these degenerate days, when infidelity passes for judgment, and obscenity for wit, genuine and true piety—the fair child of Religion—

points out a Watson* and a Horsley,† as her advocates, and as her friends.

But I presume not to expatiate any further on this subject ; a reference to the different authors works will best explain Religion, elucidate those writings, and prove their utility.

HISTORY is a relation of the most natural and important events ; while we peruse it, the mind is expanded, and receives improvement with rapture and delight ; and the study of History is now generally promoted in our schools and seminaries of education.

* Bishop of Landaff. † Bishop of Rochester.

NARRATIVE is a relation of events which affords general entertainment; facts are produced in a regular and connected series; they follow in quick succession, yet have a necessary and apparent connection, and those are the most pleasing which excite and gratify curiosity, and engage the passions.

NOVELS in general bear a great resemblance to truth; most of those produced of late years, convey instruction with delight—have a tendency to improve the morals of the age, and are the most pleasing of our literary works. The study of proper subjects lead to knowledge,

a principal cause of happiness—knowledge is a source of exquisite satisfaction, a domestic private treasury, hidden from the observation of the envy of the world ; he that has it can never lose it—like the heavenly treasure it partakes of an unperishable nature ; and it has this, in common with riches of all other sorts, that it is ever encreasing and begetting more.

Knowledge is one of the brightest rays of the Divine Nature ; and it is only bestowed upon the favourite creature, MAN.

The knowledge of books qualifies

a man to pass his time alone, he cannot want company in a library; a taste for reading is a happy refuge for the unfortunate, and a knowledge of those books, which lead to a knowledge of mankind, is a study of the greatest use, as well as the greatest entertainment. The man deprived of reading, and information, must lead the life of a mole, in perpetual darkness.

Learning, like beaten gold, is the principal ornament in the finishing that extraordinary structure, MAN. It is literature only, that can make him superior to his fellow creatures,

and finish in a worldly sense, what nature has prepared. An inclination for letters has constantly appeared the companion of great talents, and the most sublime abilities have been improved by books; for, as Prior observes,

“ Our knowledge must from these instructors
flow,

“ For 'tis a god-like attribute to know.”

But books, as well as men, may be read too much; too close an application will not be so salutary to the mind, as reading for amusement in retirement; most of our knowledge is picked up, as lord Bacon observes,

by scraps; and the learned Selden, in his Table-talk, says, that most men's learning is taken up with their earliest food; this hint is sufficient to shew, that the morning is the best time for instruction.

Idleness is the parent of innumerable vices, and our leisure hours can be no way so beneficially employed as in reading and books; no way so cheaply procured as at the Circulating Libraries. The following calculation will serve to shew, how cheap reading, information, and (I hope) instruction, is to be obtained.

The subscriber for three months

has seventy-eight clear days (Sundays excepted) to read in; he is entitled to two books at a time, and changes every day, which gives him the perusal of one hundred and fifty-six volumes, that at the low average of three shillings per volume, will cost twenty-three pounds eight shillings. Thus the subscriber at three shillings and six-pence per quarter, will pay only one farthing per volume for reading, as one hundred and fifty-six farthings is three shillings and three-pence, leaving only the small difference of three-pence in the calculation of a quarter's subscription.

This instance, I doubt not, has been experienced in every Circulating Library, and I hope will be considered cheap reading.

There are two sorts of people for whom a Circulating Library appears to offer itself—as useful and necessary,

These are, *men of business*, and *busy men*—though they are opposites in every respect; but to the first of them books will be found useful, as too close an application to business is often injurious to health—it requires that relaxation which is necessary to produce a fresh recruit of spirits, and

give back that active energy to the mind, so requisite in every branch of trade.—But to the busy man (who is not a man of business) books are absolutely necessary, or his time may be much worse engaged; here the mind is active, but cannot find sufficient employ.

To either of these, when the season invites abroad, a book is a good travelling companion, and it will be found an agreeable one by the fire side.

With the man of business therefore, they are necessary, because use-

ful; in the other instance they will be found useful, because necessary.

“ In books we have the choicest
 “ thoughts of the ablest men, in their
 “ best dress; the privilege of a good
 “ library is superior to all common
 “ enjoyments, and reading may in
 “ every sense be called a cheap
 “ amusement.

“ From the midst of bustle and
 “ business, you may in an instant, by
 “ the magic of a book, plunge into
 “ the scenes of remote ages and coun-
 “ tries, and disengage yourself from
 “ present care and fatigue.”

Thus far I have endeavoured to

prove the use and advantage of a well conducted Circulating Library ; and from a conviction of the truths urged, I wish to see them become more general ; for that purpose, I have introduced, in this part of the work—INSTRUCTIONS for opening and conducting a Library ; by which it will appear, that no uncommon abilities are required to manage the business, but on the contrary, very moderate ones are equal to the task.

Subscribers to libraries should always be provided with a catalogue ; they are bills of fare, which serve to shew the number and variety of

dishes provided for their entertainment, and save all parties a considerable deal of trouble and enquiry.

The catalogue also contains those conditions, which equally bind the librarian and subscriber.

They are articles of agreement between two contracting parties, which should be fairly observed and kept by both.

INSTRUCTIONS

For opening and conducting
A CIRCULATING LIBRARY.

In what I am now about to introduce, I shall endeavour to be intel-

ligible and useful; have therefore avoided all technical words, and terms of art, often used out of vanity and ostentation.

In the first place, I would recommend to the person intending to keep a library, either in town or country, to provide themselves with a catalogue of *books in sheets*, from each of the wholesale booksellers who publish one, by which means they will be able to make a good selection of proper books for their purpose.

For instance, let us suppose a library to consist of fifteen hundred volumes, which should be well cho-

fen from different fubjects, in the
following proportion :

60	volumes of History.
60	———— of Divinity.
30	———— of Lives.
20	———— of Voyages.
20	———— of Travels.
30	———— of Poetry.
20	———— of Plays.
1050	———— of Novels.
130	———— of Romances.
10	———— of Anecdotes.
40	———— of Tales.
30	———— of Arts and Sciences.
1500	



A knowledge of properly choofing
this felection, may eafily be obtained

by enquiry, and when purchased, should be put into the hands of a good binder, to be half bound uniform, and uncut;—my reason for advising they should be uncut, must be obvious to every person in the trade, but my wish here is to inform the public in general.

Many valuable publications are put in boards, or half bound, which at a future time, the purchaser may want to put into better binding, or new covers, then if the edges are cut and coloured, the book will have every appearance of being new.

In a populous town, and for a

larger library, a much greater number of volumes will be required, which in due proportion, may be added to the before mentioned list.

The large library will be expected to take in (for the accommodation of their readers) the Reviews, Magazines, and some of the Newspapers, which the lesser library, in a small community, with fewer readers, cannot afford to do, nor will it be expected: making out a catalogue for the use of the subscribers, is a material consideration; it is no easy task, and should be executed with care, so

that it may be clearly understood by the meanest capacity.

I have seen many different catalogues, some of them so confused, that the librarian himself has hardly known where to look for any particular work.

To large libraries I would recommend the following mode: the books on different subjects should be alphabetically arranged by themselves, and classed under their proper heads; the first book in the catalogue should be numbered one, and a similar number pasted on the back of the book, to correspond with the catalogue, and

so on in succeeding numbers, till the whole of the books are gone through, when the last number in the catalogue will be the number of volumes you have for circulation.

In the lesser library, the catalogue should be made alphabetically, but as it will be much smaller, the various subjects need not be classed under different heads, but promiscuously placed together under the appropriate letter.—There are many faults at the commencement of Circulating Libraries, and a principal one is, the crowding in a number of books, for the sake of swelling a catalogue, many

of which are not worth reading, seldom are called for, and only serve to encumber the shop.

Therefore, the first purchase should be much under the number intended to be kept; opportunities will almost daily offer of supplying new publications, at the wish of your subscribers, from the pen of popular and approved authors, till you have completed your complement.

Books purchased after the catalogue is printed, you may write in addition at the end of catalogue, and print only such a number as you may expect to dispose of in the course of

a year, or a year and a half; by that time your alterations and additions will become so numerous, as to require a new catalogue.

From experience, I am able to propose the following eligible mode of supplying your readers with fresh books, at an easy expence to yourself—by applying to other libraries you will have opportunities of exchanging such books as may have been generally read by your subscribers, for those which are done with elsewhere; by these means, each party will be equally gratified, and a fresh

supply of books gained for the use of both.

Pamphlets in general are very properly excluded from the shelves of Circulating Libraries. They are *literary mushrooms*, which only enjoy a precarious existence, therefore cannot afford a lasting source of either instruction or amusement.

I am perfectly satisfied that not one Circulating Library in twenty, is, by its profits, enabled to give support to a family, or even pay for the trouble and expence attending it; therefore the bookfelling and stationary business should always be annexed, and

in country towns, some other may be added, the following in particular, are suitable for this purpose.

Haberdashery,
Hosiery,
Hats,
Tea,
Tobacco and Snuffs; or
Perfumery, and the sale of
Patent Medicines.



One or more of the above trades, (according to situation and circumstances) may, with propriety, and ought always to be followed, by the person keeping a library in the country.

I shall now proceed to point out a

method of keeping the books; I have seen different modes, but for a small library, recommend the following.

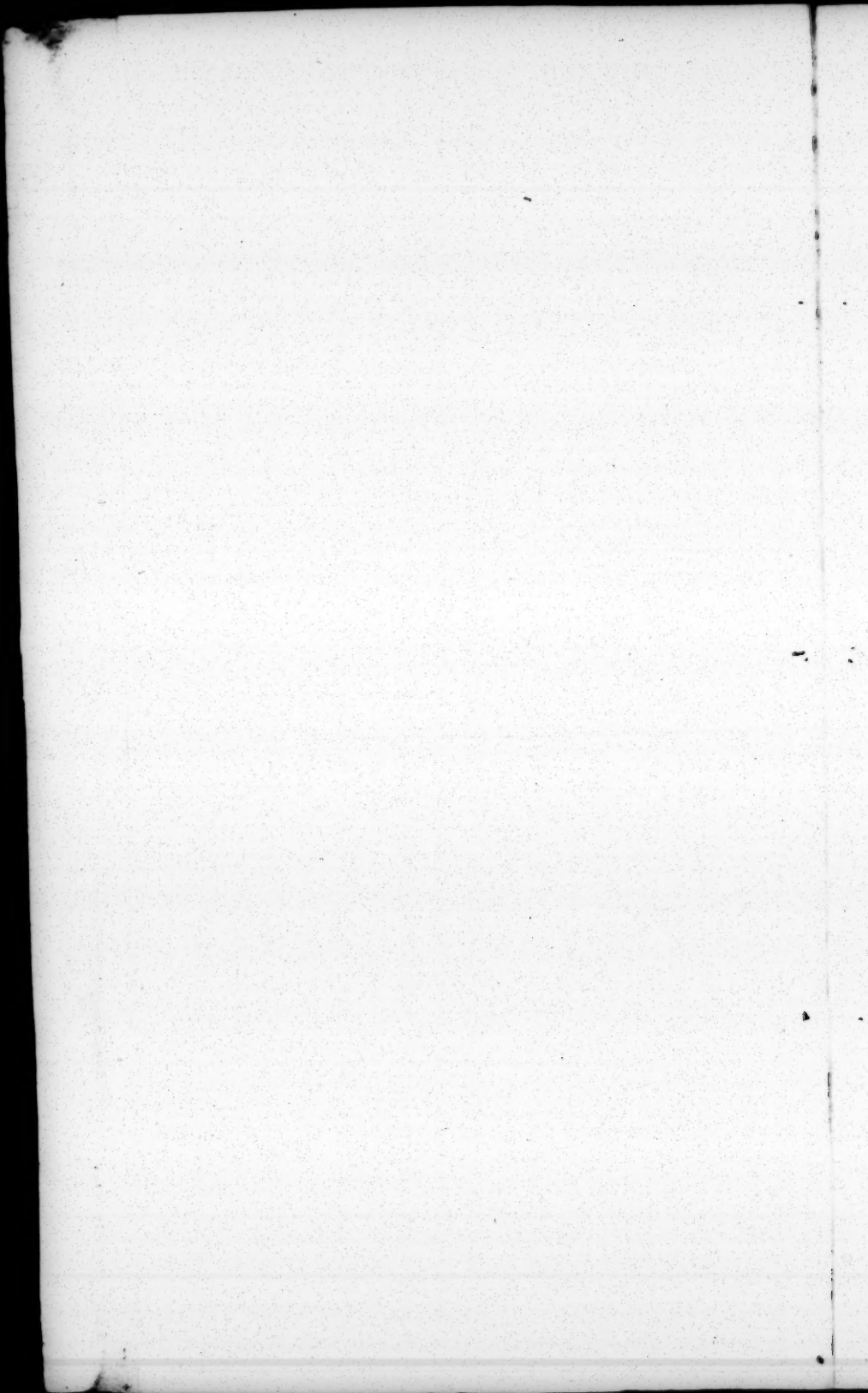
I believe it is singular, but appears to answer every purpose, and is attended with the least trouble.

Let a broad folio account book be opened, headed, and ruled, on the following plan.

When the first leaf of your subscription book is full, let the different sums be cast up, and carried over to the next, and so on to the expiration of one year, when you will be able

[illegible]

[illegible]



to ascertain the net sum of money received for subscriptions, and thus prove your interest *in* and profit *from* the library.

A common blotter will answer the purpose for keeping an account of the subscribers names, which must be entered in the margin, adding to each name the number of the book they have out of the library, and when returned cross them out, and insert those of the books they take.

The money received for single volumes, with the name of the person, and number of the book lent, may be entered in a memorandum book,

and at the end of each week, or month, the sum received should be carried into the large book, and placed in the column headed Single volumes.

Thus you will (at one view) have the consolidated amount of money received by the different subscriptions.

The same plan, upon an enlarged scale, will answer the purpose in a large library.

Every condition in the catalogue should be punctually attended to by the librarian, which *ought* to prevent

any breach of them on the part of the subscriber ; and the subscription money (without exception) should always be paid at the time of subscribing :—there have been instances of subscribers lending the books to non-subscribers ; this act (to say no worse of it) is ungenerous, and should, when known, be attended by the forfeiture of the money paid for subscription.

The librarian should never refuse to lend out any book, if it is at home ; every partial act in favour of one subscriber, is injustice to the rest—he should, if I am allowed the expression,

be a polite misanthrope ; *look* with an equal eye on opulence and poverty, and *act* so as to give offence to neither.

I firmly believe that every thing essential to the keeping of a library, is here set down ; there are a number of *trifling nothings* which may occur, to make alterations in this plan, as circumstances may vary, but such only as the weakest capacity may suggest, and accomplish.

Let it be remembered these instructions are not given under the idea that they can convey information to the established librarian—I

am not so vain as to imagine my knowledge is superior to that of others in the same line of business: in every concern of a public nature, it is our duty to be just—in this case I hope to be thought candid.

But to the young librarian, and those inclined to enter into the business, these instructions will be found useful; and every man's motto ought to be

Pro bono publico.

Having now finished the instructions for opening and conducting a

Circulating Library, by a short, plain and easy method, I shall return to their utility, as the encouragement they may expect, will in a great measure depend upon the use they are of.

Books of information and instruction, are in these days read with avidity; and where the library is composed of such, blended with others of amusement, its institution will be found a public benefit: but the greatest care should be taken to exclude every book of a profane, immoral, or indelicate nature; when proper books are put into the hands

of young persons, let reflection be joined to reading, and knowledge must, and will follow.

Reading and instruction should be universal—the humbler walks of life require much culture ; for this purpose I would recommend to their perusal, books of authenticity, in preference to those of entertainment only. The simple form of truth will cause a more lasting impression on the mind, than the taudry shade of fancy and embellishment.

Where the beauties of thought are joined with those of expression, it is

impossible but they must please ; but these are not the best books for instruction.

As a proof of this, permit me to tell the following story.—It relates to restoring old age to youth, an art which we find more than once mentioned in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* to be practised with great success ; and particularly in the seventh book, where we have a pompous and beautiful description of this operation as it was performed upon one *Æson*, by a certain sorceress named *Medea*, whom his son *Jason*, the famous knight errant, picked up in *Colchos*,

brought back with him to Greece,
and married.

This Æson it seems was very old and decrepit, having one leg in his grave, and the other just upon the brink of it. Upon their return, their father Æson not being able, by reason of his age, to partake of the rejoicings which his countrymen made upon this occasion, Jason requested his spouse to exert her magic art, and make his father younger, by taking from himself some of those many years which he had yet to come, and adding them to him—but she, like a fond new married lady,

would by no means be prevailed upon to retrench her own dear's life, but offered to take another method, which would fully answer the same end without injuring her husband; namely—by restoring old Æson to youth.—In order to this, she retires from court, and in the dead of the night, offers up a prayer to the goddess of night, the moon, and to several other gloomy powers (the deities that preside over sorcery and witchcraft) to favour her design, who received her petition very graciously, and immediately dispatched a chariot, drawn by dragons, through the air, into which she mounted, and

drove through several countries (too many to recount) where she gathered magical herbs, and other ingredients for her mysterious operations.

All these she put together into a cauldron, and boiled them up into a sacred hodge podge, with twenty solemn ceremonies and incantations.

This soup (says my author) had that wonderful virtue in it, that whatever it touched was endowed with a sudden bloom, and wherever it fell it occasioned an instant spring.

When our priestess saw this, she took her hoary patient, whipt his

windpipe asunder, and let out all his frozen inanimated blood; then with two funnels (one fixed in his mouth, the other in the wound which she made in his throat), recruited his old carcass with her holy preparation, or sovereign *elixir salutes*, immediately my old gentleman revived; his grey locks and beard turned into a dark brown; his pale withered cheek plumped up, and assumed a rosy freshness; his limbs grew as vigorous as ever, and he danced a rigadon for joy, to the amazement of all the spectators.

Pacchus looked down from his

summer house in heaven, and observed this metamorphosis, which tickled his fancy so well, that he made the same experiment upon his old nurse, with equal success.



The whole transformation is described at length, by Ovid, very elegantly ; but I take the miraculous manner of it to be merely fictitious and poetical. The moral of which in plain English is, that Medea was a very understanding woman in those days, and had found out the secret of cosmetics and restoratives, which she imposed upon that superstitious

age (when such arcana was but little known) for the effects of a supernatural art.

This is pleasing fiction; but a mind that would improve itself, must, before it can do so, set itself at large, be free from prejudice, and bold in its enquiry.

There can be no reason to search foreign countries for authors to instruct, inform, or amuse: our own has produced the greatest men in the study of letters.

In works of genius and under-

standing, some few of them have rivalled the antients.

Many of them discovered mines of useful knowledge, as well as solid pleasure—and even the common people are better informed, than in most other nations.

Persons of confined education may meet with books, the whole of which they will not comprehend; but a work is not to be condemned nor censured on this account—to such readers I beg leave to recommend the following good humoured decision of an honest sailor.

The jolly tar read Virgil with no other view, but to observe whether or not he understood geography. And as soon as he discovered that he was not ignorant, in the only point in which he himself could claim any knowledge, he admitted Virgil to be a very fine writer.

Books are *mental* food, and as we take for the body such nourishment as best agrees with our constitution and habit, so ought we to read and study such books, as the mind is able to comprehend, understand, and digest.

The love of ease is natural to people at an advanced time of life ; and some amusement is likewise necessary to qualify that ease.

In country places in general, numbers of persons are to be found retired from bustle and business, who would find their time hang very heavy, but for the amusement to be met with from Circulating Libraries.

Where the reader is an invalid, books which require study and application ; for instance, such as treat

on arts and sciences, &c. &c. should give place to those of a more entertaining nature, as most conducive to the re-establishing of health.

The very worst of books contain some good, as virtues are to be extracted from poison, but neither should be put into unskilful hands—as the chymist will be necessary to extract the virtues from the poison, so will the good moral scholar be required to select, extract, and arrange those particles of virtue, which are to be found in the most vicious of our literary productions.

Thus books may very properly be compared to men; there are good and bad of both, in the various degrees of fallibility, but not one in either that are infallible—and I believe there is no man so bad, but (as in a bad book) some good is to be found in him.—The bad of either are easily known, and as easily avoided: but in one instance the comparison does not hold good; the bad book can never become a good one, or a companion to others proper for a Circulating Library—but the bad man may become a good one, and a pre-

per companion for the rest of his species on the road of life.

“ There is more joy in heaven over one
“ sinner that repenteth, than over ninety
“ and nine just persons made perfect.”

In this attempt to prove the use of Circulating Libraries, I have made some digressions, which I hope will not be found unentertaining; on the contrary, I trust they will appear to form a pleasing variety; and it is to be hoped, as those digressions are but few, (if not introduced in improper situations) that they will not embarrass, or cause the reader to

lose sight of the principal intention of this work.

In one part I have recommended to the *bumbler walks of life*, the refusal of books of authenticity, and the arguments used in defence of the utility of Circulating Libraries, are such, as I firmly believe are founded on truth.

I do not wish by any endeavours of mine, to encrease the number of subscribers to Libraries.

The public themselves are the best judges of right and wrong; but my desire is, to do away any unjust pre-

judices which might individually be
entertained against those necessary,
because useful establishments.

“ My endeavours are to do good,

“ And I hope they will meet with success.”

Wilson on Leet Juries.

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